

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended): A method ~~for removing~~ of processing a substrate for use in a microlithographic process, said substrate having a surface and a layer applied thereon, said layer defining an edge region of a layer applied to a at the perimeter of said ~~substrate for use in a microlithographic process,~~ said method comprising:
imaging a laser beam onto the edge region of said layer ~~a layer applied to a substrate,~~
and
removing said edge region by evaporation by means of said laser beam.
2. (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the laser beam is focused in the form of a point onto the edge region by means of an imaging means.
3. (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the laser beam is imaged onto the edge region in such a manner that the laser beam is incident on the surface of the substrate in an essentially perpendicular direction.
4. (Currently Amended): The method according to claim 1, wherein the laser beam is imaged onto the edge region in such a manner that the laser beam is incident on a plane spanned by the substrate surface in an essentially parallel direction, ~~wherein the~~ and that said laser beam is incident on an edge of the substrate in a tangential direction.
5. (Currently Amended): The method according to claim 1, ~~wherein~~ further comprising removing evaporated fragments and particles of the edge region ~~are removed~~ by a vacuum device or a blower device, which is arranged in the proximity of the edge region.
6. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the substrate is essentially circular and the layer comprises a coating of a photoresist.

7. (Original): The method according to claim 1, wherein the laser beam and the substrate are moved relative to one another, while the laser beam scans the edge region in order to remove the latter.

8. (Currently amended): The method according to claim 1, ~~wherein further comprising optically scanning the edge region removed by the laser beam or a test field coated in an essentially identical manner to the edge region, is optically scanned, in order to and adapting or regulate~~ regulating a parameter of the laser beam based on said optically scanning in such a manner that the said laser beam removes said edge region or the test field is essentially removed in its entirety completely.

9. (Currently Amended): The method according to claim 1, ~~wherein further comprising:~~
providing an aperture means which is not transparent to said laser beam and arranging said aperture means at a predetermined distance from said surface of said substrate for prevents preventing the laser beam from being imaged onto regions of the substrate other than the edge region, which is to be removed.

10. (Currently Amended): A method for coating a substrate ~~with a layer, for use in a microlithographic process, said method comprising:~~
applying a layer onto a surface of said substrate, said layer defining an edge region at the perimeter of said substrate,
and imaging a laser beam onto said edge region, and
removing an said edge region of the applied layer by imaging a laser beam onto the edge region, so that the laser beam removes the edge region by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

11. (Currently Amended): An apparatus for ~~removing~~ processing a substrate for use in a microlithographic process, said substrate having a surface and a layer applied thereon, said layer defining an edge region of a layer applied to a at the perimeter of said substrate, for use in a microlithographic process, said apparatus comprising:

a laser light source for emitting a laser beam, and
imaging means for imaging said ~~the~~ laser beam onto the edge region of the substrate;
~~wherein the laser light source is adapted~~ for removing the edge region by evaporation by
means of the laser beam.

12. (Previously Presented): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the imaging means is designed to focus the laser beam onto the edge region in the form of a point.

13. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the imaging means is designed to image the laser beam onto the edge region in such a manner, that the laser beam is incident on the surface of the substrate in an essentially perpendicular direction.

14. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the imaging means is designed to image the laser beam onto the edge region in such a manner, that the laser beam is incident on a plane spanned by the surface of the substrate in an essentially parallel direction, wherein the laser beam is incident on an edge of the substrate in a tangential direction.

15. (Currently Amended): The apparatus according to claim 11, ~~wherein~~ further comprising a vacuum device or a blower device is arranged in the proximity of the edge region, ~~in order to for remove~~ removing evaporated fragments and particles of the layer from the edge region by vacuum or blowing.

16. (Currently Amended): The apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising a holding means for holding a substrate, wherein said substrate is essentially circular; and onto which a photoresist layer has been applied by means of spin coating.

17. (Original): The apparatus according to claim 11, which is configured in such a manner that the laser beam and the substrate are moved relative to one another, while the laser beam scans the edge region in order to remove the latter.

18. (Currently Amended): The apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising

an optical scanning device for ~~scanning~~ optically scanning either the edge region removed by the laser beam or a test field, ~~which is coated in a manner essentially identical to the edge region, in order, in this manner, to adapt or regulate and~~

control means for adapting or regulating a parameter of the laser beam based on said optical scanning, in such a manner that said laser beam completely removes the edge region or the test field is removed essentially in its entirety.

19. (Currently Amended): The apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising an aperture means ~~to prevent~~ which is not transparent to said laser beam and is arranged at a predetermined distance from said substrate for preventing the laser beam from being imaged onto regions of the substrate other than the edge region, which is to be removed.

20. (Currently Amended): An apparatus for coating a substrate ~~with a layer~~ for use in a microlithographic process, comprising:

a coating device for applying the layer ~~to the~~ onto a surface of said substrate, said layer defining an edge region at the perimeter of said substrate;

a laser light source for emitting a laser beam; and

~~an imaging means for imaging said the laser beam onto the edge region of the substrate, wherein the laser light source is adapted for removing of the edge region with the~~ said laser beam by evaporation.

21. (Currently Amended): A substrate, ~~which is coated with a layer~~ for use in a microlithographic process, ~~wherein said substrate having a surface which is initially coated with a layer having an edge region of the layer is at the perimeter of said substrate, wherein said edge region has been removed by imaging a laser beam onto the edge region to remove for removing the edge region by evaporation.~~

22. (Original): The substrate according to claim 21, wherein the layer comprises a hardly soluble photoresist.

23. (Original): The substrate according to claim 22, wherein the edge region is removed essentially evenly, a front face of the edge region being essentially free from the layer to be removed.

24. (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein said laser beam is focused in the form of a line onto said edge region by means of an imaging means.

25. (Previously Presented): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the imaging means is designed to focus the laser beam onto the edge region in the form of a line.

26. (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein said laser beam is focused onto said edge region by means of an imaging means comprising a lens, a mirror, or a diffractive optical element.

27. (Previously Presented): The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said imaging means comprises a lens, a mirror, or a diffractive optical element.

28. (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 24, wherein said imaging means comprises a cylindrical lens or an elongated hollow mirror.

29. (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the power of said laser is 50W-100W.

30. (New): The method according to claim 1, wherein said substrate is circular and said edge region extends along the entire perimeter of said substrate, and wherein said edge region is completely removed by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

31. (New): The method according to claim 8, wherein said substrate is circular and said edge region extends along the entire perimeter of said substrate, and wherein said edge region is completely removed by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

32. (New): The substrate according to claim 21, wherein said substrate is circular and said edge region extended along the entire perimeter of said substrate, and wherein said edge region is completely removed by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

33. (New): The substrate according to claim 22, wherein said substrate is circular and said edge region extended along the entire perimeter of said substrate, and wherein said edge region is completely removed by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

34. (New): The method according to claim 1, wherein said substrate is rectangular and said edge region extends along the entire perimeter of said substrate, and wherein said edge region is completely removed by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

35. (New): The method according to claim 8, wherein said substrate is rectangular and said edge region extends along the entire perimeter of said substrate, and wherein said edge region is completely removed by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

36. (New): The substrate according to claim 21, wherein said substrate is rectangular and said edge region extended along the entire perimeter of said substrate, and wherein said edge region is completely removed by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

37. (New): The substrate according to claim 22, wherein said substrate is rectangular and said edge region extended along the entire perimeter of said substrate, and wherein said edge region is completely removed by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

38. (New): A method of processing a substrate for use in a microlithographic process, said substrate having a surface and a layer applied thereon, said layer having a thickened edge region at the perimeter of said substrate, said method comprising:
imaging a laser beam onto the thickened edge region of said layer, and
removing said thickened edge region by evaporation by means of said laser beam.

39. (New): A process according to claim 34, wherein said layer is applied to said substrate by spin coating.

40. (New): A process according to claim 35, wherein said layer is a photoresist layer.

41. (New): A process according to claim 38, wherein said layer is applied to said substrate by a galvanic coating process.

42. (New): The substrate according to claim 38, wherein said substrate is circular.

43. (New): The substrate according to claim 38, wherein said substrate is rectangular.